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NOTES ON CURRENT AND RECENT EVENTS.¹

The New York Police Court Bill. A bill designed to improve the administration of justice in police courts of the cities of New York, drawn by Justice Chas. F. MacLean, was recently introduced into the New York Legislature. The bill required an immediate hearing of all cases of persons arrested, the abolition of all police court records of persons discharged, and a simplification of the procedure of police courts.

The Indeterminate Sentence in England. The Prevention of Crimes Act in England, which went into effect August 1, last, in the judgment of many reformers, marks the beginning of a new era in the methods of dealing with habitual criminals. The act empowers the court in the case of offenders who have already been convicted three times, to impose an indeterminate sentence of from three to five years. Every such case is required to be brought at least once every twelve months before the Home Secretary, who is given the power to release the offender on probation.

Laboratory Study of Criminals. A laboratory for the study of criminals and defectives, according to the general plan advocated by Arthur MacDonald of Washington, has recently been established in Russia with a relation to the Russian Government somewhat similar to that which the Smithsonian Institution bears to the government of the United States. Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars have been appropriated by the government for the establishment and maintenance of the laboratory. It will be remembered that several years ago Mr. MacDonald proposed the establishment of such a laboratory by the United States Government, the same to be under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice. A vigorous propaganda in favor of the project was conducted by him, and it received the approval of many scientists and lawyers, but failed of passage. More recently he submitted his scheme to various European governments and its adoption by the Russian government is, we believe, the first fruits of his long and persistent efforts in the interest of the scientific study of the criminal classes.

Children's Courts. The excellent work being done by the Children's court of New York City is shown in the recent annual report of Mr. Ernest K. Coulter, Clerk of the Court. There were fewer commitments, we are told, during the past year than during the previous year and that there were only eighty-five more arraignments, notwithstanding the increase of population. Concerning the function of the court the report says:

"Its work in withdrawing thousands from the procession of paupers and criminals that press onward to almshouses and penal institutions, and making of them future good citizens, entitles the court to be regarded as one of the municipality's most valuable assets. Viewed merely in the cold light of dollars and cents the test of appraisement would be the civic difference in citizenship between preying parasites and profitable producers. The court, in dealing with the multitude of children that comes before it each year, views each as a prospective citizen, an individual potentiality for good or evil. The thought of individual salvation is ever uppermost in dealing with

¹Furnished by J. W. G.

NOTES: RESOLUTIONS OF THE CIVIC FEDERATION.

each child. If, in the best interests of all, it is possible to rescue the child without commitment to an institution, this is done and he is saved to his home and the State at the same time. Of the 11,494 children arraigned in this one court in the year 1909 only 1,792 were committed to institutions, either charitable or reformatory."

Under the caption "reaching the causes of mental deficiency," the report dwells upon the proposed plan for the treatment of children who violate the law because of functional derangements. Finally the report presents the general results of a personal observation of more than seventy thousand cases of children who have been before the court.

Uniform Criminal Laws. It is encouraging to note the interest that is beginning to be taken by many organizations and societies in the movement for reform of criminal law and procedure in this country. One of the latest to fall in line is the National Civic Federation, which, at its recent conference on uniform state legislation, adopted the following resolutions:

"WHEREAS, the system in vogue for the trial of causes in the criminal, equity and law courts of the United States and of the several States is the subject of much current discussion, both lay and professional, and is severely criticized for its technicalities and its useless expense and delay; and

"WHEREAS, the matter of procedural reform is receiving the thoughtful consideration of the American Bar Association through a special committee created for that purpose; therefore be it

"Resolved, That this conference recognizes the need for radical changes in the administration of the law both in criminal and civil action;

"Resolved, That a committee of fifteen on Reform in Legal Procedure be created and appointed by the Chairman of the Committee on Uniform Legislation of the National Civic Federation, and that such committee be instructed to coöperate with the Committee of the American Bar Association to suggest remedies and formulate proposed laws to prevent delay and unnecessary cost in litigation, and to use the influence and power of The National Civic Federation to simplify, cheapen and expedite judicial procedure."

The committee authorized by the last resolution has been appointed by Mr. Alton B. Parker and consists of the following persons: Ralph W. Breckenridge, Omaha; Morgan J. O'Brien, New York; William E. Chandler, New Hampshire; John B. Sanborn, Madison, Wis.; Selden P. Spencer, St. Louis, Mo.; Stephen H. Allen, Kansas; Charles Jewett, New Albany, Ind.; Thomas W. Shelton, Norfolk, Va.; Stephen S. Gregory, Chicago; Willard Saulsbury, Wilmington, Del.; Amasa M. Eaton, Providence, R. I.; Lawrence Cooper, Huntsville, Ala.; Henry Wade Rogers, New Haven, Conn.; George Turner, Spokane, Wash., and T. E. MacIntire, Georgia.

The Night-Riders Set Free by Technicalities. The *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, in a recent issue, indulges in a severe criticism of the decision of the Tennessee supreme court nullifying the convictions in the recent night-rider cases. The court, in the name of the law, we are told, invalidated everything the law did and throttled justice, without ever entering into the merits of the case. It did not discuss the evidence against the defendants, nor inquire whether the evidence warranted a conviction; but simply held that the technical forms of the law were not properly observed in the selection